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ABSTRACT

The practicum reported here was designed to address the problem of a group of six college-bound 11th- and 12th-grade learning disabled students who attended a high school that did not have in place a program that would prepare them for the transition from secondary school to college. The intervention used cognitive techniques to raise the students' level of self-esteem while concurrently making the students and their parents aware of and knowledgeable about the many factors involved in the move to higher education and its impact on the student with a learning handicap. The intervention consisted of an 8-month, 32-session program of structured meetings, each dealing with a particular topic that both the literature and actual counseling experience indicated was important for a focus group to be knowledgeable about and sensitized to if the transition to the college community was to be successful. Each student's resource room teacher and parent or guardian met with the counselor on different occasions to give and receive feedback on the intervention. An evaluation of the practicum revealed that, with the exception of one of the students, each student's level of self-esteem increased as indicated on the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory. Students, resource room teachers, and parents/guardians evaluated the intervention as being helpful and of significant worth to warrant its continuation beyond the time originally allocated for its tenure. (Sample forms and letters are appended.) (Author/NB)

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ED 362 817

Using Cognitive Counseling to Provide Learning Disabled Students With Skills Necessary to Transition From High School to College

by

Ira Weiss

Cluster 44

A Practicum II Report Presented to the
Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA UNIVERSITY
1993

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

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Approved:

7/2c/93
Date of Final Approval of Report

Barry Birnbaum, Ed.D.
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ABSTRACT

Using Cognitive Counseling to Provide Learning Disabled Students With Skills Necessary to Transition From High School to College. Weiss, Ira M., 1993: Practicum Report, Nova University, Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies. Special Education/Guidance/ Counseling/Counselor Training/Counselor Education/Inservice Training/ Teacher training/Secondary/Teacher Education

This practicum was designed to address the problem of a group of six college-bound, eleventh and twelfth year learning disabled students who attended a high school that did not have in place a program that would prepare them for the transition from secondary school to college. The intervention, using cognitive techniques, purported to raise the students level of self esteem while concurrently making the students and their parents aware and knowledgeable of the many factors involved in the move into the world of higher education insofar as it impacts the student with a learning handicap.

The writer developed an 8 month, 32 session intervention of structured meetings, each dealing with a particular topic that the literature and the writer's experience as a counselor indicated was important for a focus group of six students to be knowledgeable of and sensitized to if the transition to the college community was to be successful. Each student's resource room teacher and parent or guardian, as crucial support individuals, met with the writer on different occasions for the purpose of giving and receiving critical feedback vis `a vis the intervention.

Analysis of the data revealed that, with the exception of one individual, each student's level of self esteem increased as indicated on the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory. Students, resource room teachers, and parents/guardians cited the intervention as being helpful and of significant worth to warrant its continuation beyond the time originally allocated for its tenure.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Work Setting and Community

The writer's work setting is a busy guidance office in a nationally recognized high school located in a relatively affluent suburban community of approximately 32,000 people. The commute to the city takes approximately 40 minutes by railroad and one hour by car. Due to the fact that the community is located on a peninsula, and not bisected by any major roadways, it remained comparatively homogeneous until about 15 years ago when development attracted homebuyers from nearby areas as well as the city. The community supports four elementary schools, one junior high school, and a senior high school. Each school employs a full professional staff including a full-time psychologist and speech pathologist, a social worker, reading teachers, learning disabilities specialists, guidance counselors, and a school nurse-teacher.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The school at which this writer is employed is similar in many ways to that of other high schools found in neighboring communities. It is highly competitive, having sent approximately 91% of last year's senior class on

to colleges and universities. The student population consists of approximately 1,200 students in grades 9 through 12. The professional staff numbers 140 classroom and special services teachers plus another 20 who are categorized as itinerant. The heterogeneous student population represents all of the major religions, numerous ethnic and racial groups, as well as a high number of newly arrived non-English speaking students from Central and South America and Japan. The latter are the children of executives employed by Japanese-owned businesses with offices located in the city. For the most part, these youngsters and their families remain in the United States for approximately four years before returning to their homeland.

Relative to the nature of this practicum, it is important to indicate that the school has programs for the gifted, slow learner, and learning disabled students. Advanced students are routinely encouraged to choose from among the myriad of honors and advanced placement courses available. Programs for the slow learner are available at the freshman, sophomore, and junior levels. They are respectively called the Freshman Learning Community, the Sophomore Team, and the Junior Team. Admittedly, no programs currently exist at the senior level. But, this situation is due to be rectified during the coming academic year. Learning disabled students are currently supported by a team of specialists consisting of four certified special education teachers plus three trained teaching aides who assist them in working with the 146 students identified by the Committee on Special Education (CSE) to be learning disabled. Other CSE designated students

include 13 who are speech and hearing impaired, four who are developmentally delayed, and one who is visually impaired.

The writer's role in the work place is that of staff member in a guidance department consisting of eight fully certified counselors. His multi-level experience in this specialization, consisting of nine years at the elementary level, five years at the junior high school level, and seven years at the high school level, has given him a unique perspective of both the breadth of guidance practice as well as the diverse needs of children at each level. University training has equipped him with state certification in elementary school teaching, K – 12 guidance and health education.

High school guidance practice at the writer's workplace requires, among other things, the knowledge of state requirements for graduation with both the Regents and non-Regents diplomas, postsecondary school education, vocational information, individual and small group counseling techniques, as well as the ability to quickly, but accurately, manage the ever-increasing amount of paperwork. Perhaps most significant of all, however, is this writer's experience with students in the special education program. These students have comprised at least 25% of his caseload for the past four years. The experience of serving this vulnerable population of students has sensitized this writer to the need for all special education students to be serviced by the guidance staff in a comprehensive manner.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

There existed, at this writer's high school, a situation in which learning disabled students were failing to receive effective and systematic counseling of a specialized nature which they required to enable them to effect a smooth movement from the status of high school student to that of postsecondary school student in a higher education setting following graduation. In essence, students who had been recognized by the Committee on Special Education as learning disabled had traditionally not been exposed to counseling or preparation for life beyond high school that differed in any way from their nonhandicapped peers. In particular, the educational institution had not taken their special and unique social, psychological and emotional needs into consideration.

Those individuals who were most directly affected by the lack of such a "program" were the students themselves. The families of the students also had to be considered affected in that they were unable to understand the changes that were occurring or tap the resources of the school for information as to how to handle the shift from high school student to adult.

The problem had existed for a minimum of seven years, the time that this writer had been employed at the high school prior to the practicum intervention. As the population of learning disabled students increased, so did the problem. More learning disabled (LD) students were graduating and going on to higher education than ever before. Their needs, however, were not being serviced in a way that would have assured them the best chance of surviving and prospering from the change.

Succinctly stated, the problem that existed was that neither the students nor their parents were being adequately prepared for the changes and challenges that they would encounter and have to deal with upon graduation from high school regardless of the choices they had made for the future.

Problem Documentation

Evidence that the problem existed was supported by observations and interviews conducted by this writer. In the late Spring of 1992, during the writer's end-of-year observation of resource room activities and special education classes, never had this writer observed students and their teachers discuss issues related to the student's transition from high school life to postsecondary school adult life. Several discussions held with special education teachers and resource room assistants revealed that they did not, on other than a happenstance and cursory manner, deal with transition issues of a social, psychological, emotional or academic matter even though each believed strongly that these issues were timely and should be addressed.

An interview held with the chairman of the guidance department and

several of this writer's counselor colleagues corroborated this writer's belief that transition issues, as described by the writer, were not routinely discussed although the generic and rather routinized issue of post high school planning was considered to be an important part of the counselor's job.

A meeting was also held with the school psychologist who indicated that issues related to transition were frequently a part of his clinical interviews with referred students, some of whom were learning disabled, and their parents. He underscored, however, that his encounters with students were done only with those referred to him and then on an as-needed basis.

Others, including several teachers and administrators, failed to identify transition issues as within their operational domain in dealing with special education students and consequently indicated that it was not something they did.

Causative Analysis

An analysis by this writer of the reasons why transitional counseling was not being done led him to certain insights. Interviews with educators in both the pupil personnel and instructional areas of education have clearly, and to the satisfaction of this writer, shown that the absence of transitional counseling was not a result of either malfeasance or a desire on the part of professionals to avoid doing a task. Rather, it seemed to be the consequence of them not giving adequate consideration to the student after his departure from the secondary school and subsequent entrance into adult life.

As the literature shows, special education teachers and resource room instructors tend to be task oriented individuals who concentrate the preponderance of their time on "here and now" tutorial and basic skills instruction. Transition issues that at some later time may entangle their students and their families are frequently not considered. It had been this writer's experience, however, that when focused on the issue of the need for transitional counseling, teachers of students-in-need were the first to voice support for such a program. They did indicate, nevertheless, that time constraints made it difficult, and indeed impossible at times, to incorporate additional tasks into their daily activities.

Discussions with counselors, those that we might expect to be most involved with students in doing transitional counseling, and previous research by this writer indicated another causative factor for the absence of such involvement. Many counselors indicate a clear reticence about working with CSE designated learning, and otherwise, disabled students in other than the most routine fashion — course selection and other forms of routine academic counseling. They questioned their ability to be of help to these students in that their training involved a minimum of coursework in special education. In fact, the training of prospective counselors tends not to focus heavily on working with special students. It is, as most educator training programs seem to be, geared for the average child in regular classes. Although many counselor preparatory programs nowadays include at least some coursework in special education, this was not always the case.

Consequently, when many counselors who are now in service received their training, special education coursework was not mandated as part of their program.

Several other reasons abound as to why counselors have been less than eager to provide transitional counseling. First, as a result of Public Law 94-142, the number of students in the schools who were classified as learning disabled grew immensely. To meet the needs of these newly classified students, resource room facilities and staffs also increased in size. These professionals tended to assume a broad spectrum of responsibilities, counseling included. This, in time, tended to diminish the contacts that counselors had with special needs students. Thus, a precedent, one that is clearly not in those students best interests, was established.

The glut of guidance department paperwork was also cited by counselors as a reason to avoid additional duties. Although cited as important and, as some stated, necessary, the task of doing transitional counseling as defined in this Practicum would, it was felt, add an additional burden to the counselor's day.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

The literature is replete with documentation concerning the need and practice of transitional counseling. Although similar in purpose and meaning, definitions of transition differ from writer to writer. For example, Hedberg (1987) defines the construct of transition as

> ...a process designed to move students from school to

> postsecondary education or employment and a quality adult life. This process includes the development of independent living skills and involvement in social and recreational activities as well as the opportunity for job placement and advancement. (pp. 7-8)

Seidenberg (1986) defines the term somewhat less globally, stating that transition planning is "... a carefully planned process which can be initiated by high school personnel to establish and implement a plan upon high school entry for the LD student with college potential" (p. 3). Halpern, on the other hand, defines transition colloquially as "a period of floundering that occurs for a least the first several years after leaving school as adolescents attempt to assume a variety of adult roles in their communities" (p. 203).

For the purposes of this practicum, this writer has aligned himself with Scott (1991) by defining and limiting the concept of transitional counseling to mean counseling learning disabled students, who are soon to graduate from secondary school, in areas other than the academic domain. These areas will include interpersonal, communication and motivational domains as well as trying to develop and enhance, where necessary, self-monitoring, self-advocacy and decision-making competencies.

It was this writer's experience that virtually all research perused for this literature review addressed the findings and convictions of researchers and authors that transitional counseling of the learning disabled student, re-

gardless of what that student's postsecondary plans might be, is not taking place. Additionally, Scott (1991), in discussing the federal government's role in the education of learning disabled students implies that, with the exception of some relatively recent legislation (Halpern, 1992), its influence is not significant. This writer has observed, in fact, that what takes place within school systems regarding special education services is often quite different than what the state or federal legislators intended in passing such legislation.

Despite the fact that transition counseling and programming are viewed as important, the literature indicates that there are pitifully few such endeavors in existence at the current time. Dowdy, Carter & Smith (1990) for example express that transition programs were either non-existent or ineffective in most schools they surveyed. Their study clearly illustrated that the majority of LD students in the schools they assessed were not the receiving transitional services they required to facilitate their movement to postsecondary education or work. In lamenting the fact that the college freshman year is generally recognized as being the most stressful with students at greatest risk for dropping out, Brown and Christianson (cited in Austin and Martin, 1992) assert that one possible cause of this, especially for the learning disabled student, is that coping mechanisms are insufficient in most schools to assist students with "the intellectual, social, academic, and personal transitions necessary in moving from high school to college" (p. 116). Gloeckler (1988) in a New York State Education Department

sponsored study of transitional programs that would help prepare learning disabled students for entrance into a community college, assertively deplored the dearth of such programs.

The literature indicates that traditionally, transition programs, when they did exist, tended to focus on students considered to be moderately to severely disabled and frequently was an exercise in teaching what were categorized as "independent living" and rudimentary forms of competitive employment skills (Posthill & Roffman, 1991). Halpern (1992) described early transition counseling as essentially a form of career counseling which, in turn, was an extension of the work/study "movement" that proceeded it. He, as does Dowdy, Carter & Smith (1990), see transition planning in schools as frequently ineffective or absent altogether. In spite of what clearly appears to be a rather pessimistic scene in terms of available transition programs at this time, there appears to be some reason for optimism. It is instructive to note that while in the mid 1980s Deshler, Schumaker, Lenz, and Ellis (1984) bemoaned the lack of literature and empirical research with respect to transition programs for LD students, this writer has, in researching the topic 8 years later, found a plethora of research and related literature pertaining to transition.

In an effort to establish the kinds of nonacademic transition services this writer might employ in conducting the practicum intervention, further investigation into the literature seemed appropriate. Based on their own exhaustive literature search, Price and Aune (1988) found there to be five

common assumptions regarding the transition process. First, they maintain that the transition process does exist. That is, "many authors now assume that there is a developmental phase between adolescence and adulthood when learning disabled individuals shift their attention from passing classes and socializing in high school towards the independence, challenges and freedom of adulthood" (p. 1). Second, they assert that transition is an important phase and believe it to be a critical developmental milestone in the lives of individuals with learning disabilities. Third, they believe that support is necessary. In essence, they state that a great deal of support must be available during the transition process. Admittedly, the support will vary in style and substance depending on individual needs and the services available. Some authors, for example, advocate academic and remedial skills support as vital (Shabbier and Talpers, 1987) whereby others focus on social skill and psychosocial disabilities (Rosenthal, 1986). Fourth, transition is a life-long process. Price and Aune state that most authors now concur that LD students do not "grow out of" their disability and that supportive services will be crucial throughout their lives. Fifth, the authors believe there to be specific and fairly well-defined ideologies among professionals. Some, for example, emphasize that transition services must be multidisciplinary to be successful. Others feel that "focusing on the LD individual is not enough" (p. 2).

The literature voluminously addresses the needs of the learning disabled student concerning nonacademic transitional counseling. In the introduc-

tion to her highly intriguing longitudinal case study, Evelo (1990) addresses the issue of there being pitifully few high quality transitional programs for learning disabled students that can serve as effective models for schools wishing to establish such programs as is the case at this writer's workplace. She clearly expresses her frustration with the reality and continuing prospect of students with complex needs being denied the kind of services they require for success in meeting the challenges of postsecondary school education and employment. Scott (1990), in the course of discussing the change in the legal status of a student as he makes the transition from that of high school to college student, further addresses the issue of the lack of adequate transition programs for college bound learning disabled students. In essence, she states that the kind of "orientation" program that might suffice for the non-handicapped individual, will not do so for the student with a mild to moderately severe disability. The implication that transition programs for disabled students who anticipate higher education are indeed rare, is clear. Neubert and Foster (1988) furthermore deplore the fact that because of the lack of transition programs for students with learning disabilities in many secondary schools, they are leaving school without the skills they will need to seek and keep employment, better their positions or effectively cope with job changes.

The availability of transition services to the learning disabled student population is an imperative. Other than in its most rudimentary form, the students who participated in this practicum intervention did not have these

services available to them. Kortering, Haring, and Klockars (1992), in exploring the breadth of the LD population indicate that although they comprise only 4% – 5% of the total school population, they account for 75% of those who drop out. An earlier work by Deshler, Shumaker, Lenz, and Ellis (1984) maintained that educators must assume, based on their research findings, that learning disabled students will have a more difficult time transitioning from high school to adult life than their non-learning-disabled peers. Rojewski's (1989) findings that learning disabled students, as a group, tend not to do well after high school lends additional support to the pressing need for transition services.

Two issues of concern to this writer and which are frequently documented in the literature — social skills and self-esteem — clearly appear as problem areas for learning disabled students. In a work that reviewed social interventions for students with LD, McIntosh, Vaughn, and Zaragoza (1991) assert that many learning disabled students experience difficulty in being accepted by their peers as well as in making and keeping friends. They further maintain that this finding is so universal that the U.S. Interagency Committee on Learning Disabilities has proposed a revised definition of learning disabilities that would include social skills as one of the disorders. Reviewing the results of the study proved interesting to this writer in that a pattern of intervention successes appeared to be linked to the size of the intervention group with the most successful being single-subject designs as opposed to small and large group designs.

Concerning the issue of self-esteem as it relates to the learning disabled student, Price (1989) states:

> One of the most commonly cited psychosocial characteristics observed in LD individuals is a pervading sense of low self-esteem or poor self-concept. Learning disabled individuals from many different settings, ages and educational backgrounds all express feelings of inadequacy, failure and shame. (p. 2)

While no distinct program of transition services for the LD student existed at this writer's workplace, based on the literature, it is his belief that any intervention with these students that fails to concentrate attention on issues related to self-esteem and self-concept must be considered remiss.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goal and Expectations

The following goal was projected for this practicum:

> Six CSE designated learning disabled high school juniors and seniors who have expressed their intent on attending a college or university will be exposed to transitional counseling that focuses on relevant issues.

The expectations of this writer for the students were that they be exposed to transition, both as a construct as well as a phenomenon, that is common to all individuals involved in the process of change. Additionally, it was expected that they would benefit from the cooperative approach envisioned by this writer to transitional counseling that would include themselves as the primary "players," the school, as represented by their teachers and guidance counselors, and their parents. Each would, furthermore, understand the importance of the role they play in smoothing the transition of the students from high school to adult life.

Expected Outcomes

The following outcomes were projected for this practicum:

Outcome 1 The learning disabled students will have experienced approximately 8 months of transition counseling and be able to express what benefits they derived from the effort. They will be able to explain their role in providing for a smooth and relatively anxiety-free transition from high school to postsecondary school life.

The evaluation tool to be used will be a forced choice sentence completion inventory (see Appendix C) produced by this writer upon which the students will indicate their assessment of the intervention as it relates to transition issues. This writer will expect each to respond to at least 9 out of the 12 items as "helpful." They will also be asked, in a 3 item questionnaire, to subjectively indicate their impressions of the project and how it impacted their lives.

Outcome 2 All of the students involved will have experienced a positive change in self-esteem as indicated by a minimum increase of at least 5 points between the pre and post intervention administration of the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (CSI).

Outcome 3 Each student's resource room teacher will understand that transition is an important phase in a learning

disabled adolescence's life. They will understand the important role they play in that individual's transition process.

This writer will elicit from each individual student's resource room teacher that person's subjective response to an orally presented questionnaire (See Appendix D). They will be queried as to any changes they've noted in the student or themselves that they could attribute to the intervention. This writer will expect that all involved individuals will describe an increase in the student's quality of academic and interpersonal functioning.

Outcome 4 All of the parents of the students involved will have come to better understand the process of change and be able to predict with some degree of confidence what is to be expected and how to best deal with it. The parents' subjective responses to a writer-generated orally administered questionnaire (See Appendix E) will contribute to the writer's assessment of the intervention.

Measurement of Outcomes

The determination of how to best measure the outcomes was based on a combination of factors. For the students, the object was to combine the

ease of completion, with the least amount of frustration involved, along with the accumulation of the kind of information that would best inform the writer as to the success of the intervention. The blend of forced-choice and subjective-response questions (see Appendix B) seems to satisfy the requirement. The use of the Coopersmith Inventory, School Form (1981), to measure and document changes in the student's level of self-esteem was based on this writer's own perusal of the inventory and belief in its appropriateness as well as a discussion held with this writer's practicum advisor.

The instruments used to obtain feedback from resource room teachers and parents were in questionnaire format, orally administered. This was deemed by this writer, based on his experience with Practicum I, to be the most efficient and desirable way of obtaining information from such a small and closely bound group of respondents.

Based in part on guidance from this writer's practicum advisor, an in-depth explanatory analysis and discussion of the results of the evaluative instruments takes place within the context of the Discussion section appearing later in this practicum report. The qualitative characteristics of the instruments used are such that a discussion of the ways in which the items were answered seemed to be an appropriate method of analysis. The results are quantified insofar as the number of individuals, albeit small, who responded in a particular manner are concerned. The pre and post administration results of the Coopersmith Inventories are presented as configured and subsequently explained.

Unanticipated events and occurrences that were encountered during the 8 month intervention period are documented and explained within the body of the report. This writer utilized a log to track the practicum experience.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Possible Solutions

The problem that existed was that neither the postsecondary school bound learning disabled students nor their parents were being adequately prepared for the changes and challenges that they could expect to encounter and have to deal with upon graduation from high school regardless of the choices they've made for the future.

A joint report issued by the President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped and the American Council on Education indicated that 7.4% of all college freshmen have a disability (cited in Gloecker, 1988). Additionally, it stated that 15% of this total were identified as learning disabled. Gloecker reports on a needs assessment that was undertaken by the Office of Educational Research and Evaluation and sent to a random sampling of the following constituency groups: secondary regular, special and occupational education teachers, vocational rehabilitation counselors, guidance counselors, parents and community college coordinators of disabled student services. The results clearly indicated the professionals' collective

belief that transition considerations must be part of a well planned, coordinated and early begun effort to prepare students for movement out of the high school and into postsecondary education. Additionally, and among others, the following "needs" were cited by Gloecker: self-advocacy and assertiveness training, the teaching of compensatory strategies and social skills, allowing students flexible time in obtaining the high school diploma, inservice training of teachers to sensitize and instruct them regarding the needs of the LD student, viewing the guidance counselor as being integral in the transition process from the perspective of transition planner, information source on colleges, as well as a student advocate with the postsecondary school institution. The respondents also indicated that parents need realistic information about the student's abilities and disabilities as well as information on vocational and college options in order to best help their child. Lastly, the survey emphasized the need for strong support and ongoing encouragement and reassurance to learning disabled students throughout their high school experience.

The concerns of this writer regarding the higher education bound LD student revolve largely around issues of a social/emotional nature and how they are to be treated by the counselor. These concerns are closely aligned with several researchers who view the non-academic domain as an outstanding concern. Included among them are Schumaker and Ellis, 1982; Larson and Gerber, 1987 and Trapani, 1987 (cited in McInstosh et al., 1991). Collectively, they tend to be optimistic in terms of what the coun-

selor can do to enhance the ability of the LD student to navigate his way through the social milieu that is so much a part of the adolescent's life. Discussion by Shaw, Byron, Norlander, McGuire and Anderson (1987) citing the issue of need for social skills training attests to the importance of school personnel understanding that learning disabled high school students may not have the social skills necessary to be successful at college. Interpersonal problems, be they with other students or with instructors, can become apparent in a community where independence and self-advocacy are expected. They continue by underscoring that a part of many learning disabilities is the inability of the individual to effectively perceive, understand, and appropriately react to the verbal and nonverbal cues which are contained within all social interactions. Thus there exists the "frequent inability of learning disabled students to maintain healthy and cordial relations with their friends and with adults" (p. 12). Closely related to the issue of social skills is that of communication skills (Donohue and Byron, 1984).

This writer, in planning his approach to the relatively novel idea of transition counseling with LD students seeking higher education, found himself in alignment with Vaughn (1985) who advocates direct instruction of students in the area of critical social skills. His belief, as is this writer's, is that the combined approach of teaching specific skills and appropriate social behaviors in addition to providing necessary counseling services comprise the most effective means of teaching important social skills. This

writer, similar to Vaughn, believes in the worth of self-exploration with LD students for the purpose of them being able to identify their own academic and social/emotional strengths and weaknesses.

Further responding to the concern of researchers primarily involved with the non-academic development of the LD adolescent, Okolo and Sitlington (1986) address the need for "therapeutic" emphasis to be placed on improving the student's interpersonal skills. Rojewski (1989) also indicates that social development and perception must be an area of intensive counseling energy in that it is problematic for many learning disabled students.

In justifying the single subject counseling approach, this writer sought the "counsel" of McIntosh et al. (1991) who document the high success rate of single-subject social and interpersonal skills counseling. Attesting to the benefits of such counseling for the learning disabled student, Shaw et al. (1987) assert that counseling can help students learn to allay fears (ie. Am I retarded?), improve their self-concept (ie. I do have areas of strength), and enable them to actively and informatively participate in the planning of their postsecondary school experience.

This writer's belief in and reasons for involving parents in the project found its support in the work of Ness (1989) who treats the issue of parents going through the transitions with their offspring as a potential source of difficulty for the family at large. She addresses the pressing need for the counselor to deal with the issue of dependence vs. independence, feelings of

failure, confusion concerning their children's ability, and the loss of the familiar school support system. Additionally, in her study of the effects of social support on the self-concept of learning disabled students, Forman (1988) found parental support to be among the most important predictors of positive self-concept. In an earlier but highly informative study, McDavis, Nutter & Lovett (1982) concluded that involvement of parents in any counseling program for LD students is imperative in that, viewed generally, the influence they have on their children is paramount to all others. In a more global perspective on the influence of parents, Halpern (1992) states that the role of schools as agents of social change as well as the role of parents are intertwined and cannot be separated.

Strategic approaches abound as to how to best counsel the learning disabled student and his family involved in the transition process. Among those already mentioned one can add the assignment of a "counselor specialist" or "special education counselor" (Kornich, 1983) to work with the learning disabled students, do group counseling (Omizo & Omizo, 1987) as opposed to or in addition to single-subject counseling as well as utilizing the inservice modality as a way of training others to do transition counseling. Austin and Martin (1992) suggest that in order to best prepare LD students for their first year of college, school administrators need to encourage and provide for small group and classroom guidance and counseling sessions as well as mini-courses that teach effective study and communication skills among other "survival" competencies. In such milieus, stu-

dents would be shown how and be encouraged to develop social support networks.

The final strategy to be discussed at this time is that of cognitive transition counseling as a tool to be used with learning disabled students. Proposed and supported by numerous researchers (Bello, 1989; Deshler, Schumaker, Lenz, & Ellis, 1984; McIntosh, Vaughn, & Zaragoza, 1991), cognitive counseling is viewed as an approach whereby, as Bello states, students "are taught to manage their cognitive abilities and motivational efforts in such a way that learning is effective, economical and satisfying" (p. 298). Bello further suggests that cognitive counseling can be most helpful in enabling the student to evaluate the nature and difficulty of a task before attempting it, formulate a viable plan of action as well as explore various options.

It appears clear to this writer that each "strategy" has its own merit and constitutes a part of the solution of presenting a quality transitional counseling program to the student. It is as difficult indeed to question the worth of a cooperative approach to such a program as it is to deny that teaching alternative study skills tactics to the LD student is a worthwhile endeavor. In essence, all approaches and considerations addressed in the above paragraphs, viewed singly or in tandem constitute a methodology that will service the needs of the LD student.

Description of Selected Solution

The design of the intervention envisioned by this writer incorporat-

ed, in essence, several of the strategies and suggestions for content inclusion as stated in the previous section. It was a cognitively-based and comprehensive 8 month, 32 week program which sought to prepare 6 CSE designated learning disabled students for the transition to postsecondary education. The students were selected, based on appropriateness for the project, by both the director of special education and this writer. Students met individually with the writer weekly for approximately 30 minutes. They met together, again with the writer, on occasion, as a small group. Parents were invited to meet with the writer either as a group or individually, twice during the implementation period, depending on their preferences. As documented originally in the practicum proposal and consistent with the thoughts of Scott (1991), this writer included the following as his objectives:

- Increase knowledge of oneself as learner, including strengths, weaknesses and learning styles.
- Expand self-understanding to clarify personal values and priorities and increase exposure to potential areas of study in higher education.
- Develop decision-making skills, including how to consider options, weigh pros and cons, and prioritize outcomes.
- Develop communication skills including the ability to present oneself with appropriate assertiveness for self-advocacy.
- Develop the ability to identify and implement personal and

educational goals.

- Develop skills in monitoring academic performance and evaluating whether goals are being met as well as recognizing personal indicators of academic difficulty and to know when help is needed.
- Develop an understanding of what information needs to be considered in selecting a college and how to attain it.
- Assist student in becoming knowledgeable of the college application procedure and how to maximize their personal presentation in the process of applying to a college and how to perform well in personal interviews as well as be able to emphasize individual strengths and abilities in a written essay.

Additionally, other counseling issues which were treated included self-esteem/self-concept, the development of independence from parents, continuing to cope with a learning disability as well as the "label" of being learning disabled, dealing with social and interpersonal relationships and career counseling, albeit of questionable depth.

This writer also believes it to be of importance for learning disabled students to know and understand how the change in legal status, from that of being within the parameters of P.L. 94-142 to that of being "covered" by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 impacts them. Consequently, issues relating to this change were included in a discussion with each stu-

dent concerning his/her rights under 504 as well as his/her obligations and responsibilities.

Report of Action Taken

Prior to beginning the actual implementation, students were selected, contacted and advised concerning the project. Discussion ensued as to their desire and willingness to participate. After deciding to do so, their parents were contacted by phone and spoken to briefly about the project. Permission was officially sought and acquired using a letter sent home to the parent of each Junior (see Appendix A) and each senior (see Appendix B) that specified information about the purpose, goals and operation of the intervention. Parents were also invited, using the same medium, to participate in several meetings with this writer to discuss issues relevant to the intervention and post-high school planning.

Logistically, all sessions were held in this writer's counseling office. It afforded adequate comfort and privacy to all of the individuals, both students and parents, and was conducive to the kind of verbal interchange this writer planned to have with each.

It should be noted that although the practicum proposal indicated that 5 learning disabled students were to be included, a sixth was added. This student, originally intended as an "extra" in the event that one of the others was unable to continue, maintained near perfect attendance at all of the sessions — as did all of the others. Therefore, he is included in this practicum report. Additionally, all of the students selected were part of

this writer's caseload making it unnecessary to tap that of another counselor. This was contrary to what was indicated previously. The writer's practicum advisor was informed of this modification at the beginning of the intervention.

Based on the timeline, as projected in the practicum proposal, the implementation activities, documented in the pages that follow, took place on a weekly basis for an 8 month period of time. Changes in procedure or order are noted, where appropriate, in each explanation.

It is important to note that a part of each session in which seniors were involved included guidance regarding college application and admission information of particular interest and importance to the LD student — issues such as filling out the application, writing the required essay, interviewing and the option to take the SATs untimed.

Month 1

Week 1

The purpose of this first session was that it serve as an "ice-breaker." After receiving a reminder about the session, a practice that was repeated regularly each week, each student joined with this writer to discuss in finer detail than before the purpose of the project and what he/she could expect to occur. Questions that each student had were answered and he/she was encouraged to discuss any concerns that had been troubling to him/her at this time. The student was also advised of the Coopersmith Self-Esteem

Inventory (CSI) that was to be administered to him/her the following week and the reason he/she was being asked to complete it.

Although the students were told that each session was preplanned, this writer made clear to them that problems or issues that they felt were important, but not necessarily related to the "topic of the week" could be discussed. Specific questions that they raised concerning how they were chosen to participate and why their parents were contacted were answered by this writer in a candid and credible fashion. The students, so as to further relieve anxieties they might have had, were advised that confidentiality would be maintained and that unlike a class, there would be no tests or grades given.

Week 2

Each student was administered the CSI by this writer. It was unnecessary for the protocol to be read to any of the students and each individual took approximately 20 of the 30 minutes that this writer estimated they would need to complete the inventory. Although several of the students asked for assistance, they seemed to have virtually no problem with the experience. With time remaining in the session, this writer engaged the students in a discussion about self-esteem, as it appeared in the name of the protocol they had just completed. They were asked to discuss what they thought it meant and how they could tell if a peer possessed it or not. The students were then queried concerning the difference between self-esteem and self-image, constructs that Boxer and Petersen (1986) claim are vitally

linked during adolescence. Responses were occasionally rephrased by this writer, in a Rogerian (1961) client-centered counseling manner, so as to better clarify the meaning and essence of the terms for the student.

Week 3

The writer reviewed the concepts discussed during the previous session and elicited from each student thoughts each had concerning himself/herself in terms of self-esteem and self-image. The students were encouraged to consider the etiology of these thoughts and how they developed. Dialogue was vigorously encouraged and cognitive counseling techniques, as developed by Ellis (1975), were used to refute negative thoughts the students verbalized about themselves, including their personal capabilities and chances of being successful in college.

This writer met with the learning disabilities resource room staff and its chairperson to explain the nature of the intervention. Emphasis was placed on the way that the counseling-based practicum intervention would complement the work they were doing with the 6 students. This writer underscored the importance of transition counseling for learning disabled students, as documented in the literature, and encouraged them to ask any questions they wished concerning the intervention. The staff was offered the opportunity to review this writer's practicum proposal to learn more about the project.

Week 4

A brief review of the previous session succeeded in encouraging further

dialogue concerning each student's view of himself/herself. For each student, this writer vigorously underscored the importance of viewing his/her learning disability as a processing problem as opposed to being one of insufficient intelligence. Each student was exhorted to view his/her disability as not being anyone's fault. Further, each individual was urged to understand that given time, self-generated personal effort, and encouragement as well as the appropriate accommodations he/she is legally entitled to receive, he/she will achieve. Students were individually counseled for the purpose of helping them to see that they were essentially in control of their academic destinies.

This writer decided at this time to limit the use of the term "learning disabled" in counseling the students. He sensed that the students were somewhat uncomfortable with the term insofar as it applied to themselves. Emphasis was placed on building a strong bond between the student and this writer and the term "learning disabled" was viewed as an inhibiting factor.

Month 2

Week 5

This session began with a brief review of the past 4 sessions the aim of which was to highlight the tenet of cognitive counseling, as noted by psychologist Milton Ebner (personal communication, October 8, 1992) that thoughts usually precede and, almost always, determine behavior. This session was intended to increase the student's knowledge of himself/herself as

a learner. A selective review, held jointly with this writer, of his/her cumulative academic folder materials, as well as a discussion of his/her learning style (ie. visual vs. auditory) ensued. Each student was encouraged to ask whatever questions they had about the material found within. Answers were given forthrightly and with no equivocation by this writer. The students were helped to understand that some approaches to schoolwork have and will continue to result in success more frequently than others. Based in part on academic achievement as well as what this writer knew personally about each student, his/her perceived and actual strengths and weaknesses were explored. As a "homework" assignment for the next session the students were asked to keep track of the academic tactics or strategies that he/she identified himself/herself using. The student was also asked to note those that he/she found to be most successful.

Week 6

After asking if all was going well, this writer sought to revive and perpetuate the discussion that was begun last session. Each student was requested to share with the writer the degree of success he/she had in monitoring his/her work strategies and tactics. As a preliminary, this writer gave the silencing of the radio or TV prior to beginning homework as well as the setting for himself/herself a relatively short term goal for the evening's study time as an example of such strategies. The students were strongly encouraged to see that an arbitrary, as opposed to a considered approach toward schoolwork, and perhaps life, is often counterproductive. An exer-

cise was presented to each student in which he/she was asked to identify a personal goal, either long or short term. The individual was then asked to plan the various steps necessary to attain the goal. Discussion concerning the benefits, especially for the student with a learning disability, of thinking about and plotting goal attainment ensued.

Week 7

Through the use of a values clarification exercise, the writer explored with each student the meaning of the term "value" as it applied to their lives as adolescents living at this time. They were asked to cite the "things" they valued most both now and, as they projected, in the future. Discussion was generated to underscore the belief that families play an important part in the acquisition of one's values. Additional discourse, consistent with cognitive counseling techniques, was intended to show the students that although they may be, at least in part, a product of their past, they need not be a victim of it.

The students were introduced to the term "prioritization" by this writer. This concept, as treated by Covey (1989), was discussed in terms of clarifying values and was shown to be the outcome of comparing the relative worth of activities based on their relationship to those values. Additionally, this writer introduced the idea of long, intermediate, and short term goal setting with the students. The concept of daily planning, "of making a specific plan to accomplish those goals and activities determined to be of

greatest worth" (p. 150), was elaborated on by this writer and discussed with the students.

Week 8

The last session was expanded upon to include how self-understanding, knowledge of one's personal values and priorities, can serve to increase exposure to potential areas of study in higher education. Each student was encouraged to think in terms of his/her likes and dislikes, academic and social strengths and weaknesses, and the type of college or university the student thinks he/she might like to attend from the perspectives of location, size, and setting. With time remaining, each student and this writer reviewed several of the issues that were discussed during past sessions.

Month 3

Week 9

The purpose of this session was to discuss the process of decision making generally, as well as the way the student, in particular, makes decisions. Actual situations currently transpiring in the student's life were treated and used as examples to demonstrate the decision-making process. Skills, such as how to view and consider options, weigh pros and cons and prioritize needs were the topics of discussion. This writer's intention was to help students feel more confident about their decision-making competencies. Students were encouraged to trust themselves to make correct decisions about important issues. They were also urged to "touch base" with another if in doubt. The construct of "conscience" was introduced at this time in

the context of having a trusted friend as a guide. Students were prompted to see that all behaviors are the result of conscious or unconscious decisions that they make. This writer reminded students of an earlier session in which it was maintained that cognitions precede behaviors.

Week 10

The topic of report card grades, routinely distributed every 10 weeks, was discussed with the students. This writer obtained a copy of the students' grades prior to them receiving the report card in class. He reviewed the grades and attended to both the positive and/or negative feelings that each student expressed. Feelings of satisfaction at having done well as well as feelings of frustration or anger at not having done better, along with the concomitant sense anxiety of having to face disappointed parents, were examples of issues that were discussed. The reasons for the spread between a grade that the student might have expected and actually received was discussed. This writer queried each student as to how he/she could improve his/her grades. The students were encouraged to see this task as "do-able." As before, each individual was urged to see himself/herself to be, to a great degree, in control of their achievement and success. In each situation, the writer aggressively sought to bolster the student's self-esteem by helping him/her challenge negative cognitions they tended to generate (ie. "I'm stupid and will never amount to much.").

Week 11

This writer conducted a review of the last session with each student. He

furthermore prompted a discussion with each student concerning the way that his/her parents reacted to his/her grade reports. The students were encouraged to communicate their perception of their parent's expectations regarding academic achievement. Corresponding to what he perceived to be the needs of each student, this writer individually formatted the discussion activity. Referring to the process of decision-making the students were helped to see that the application of effort, the forgoing of certain pleasurable activities and a willingness to tolerate some frustration in tackling an academic task is the result of a conscious or unconscious decision made by the individual. For the following session each student was encouraged to record some of the important decisions he/she would be making during the interlude. He/she was also asked to note the feelings he experienced in the decision-making process (ie. anxiety).

Week 12

A review and discussion of the student's notations made during the previous week took place. Discussion was held with each student concerning the feelings he/she identified while making "important" decisions. The student was encouraged to understand that as an individual with a learning disability, he/she may have to work more diligently than his/her peers to achieve satisfactory grades and that the decision to do that must be consciously made. The writer urged each student to see himself/herself as an intelligent, capable person of significant worth. Once again, he encouraged

and demonstrated to the student how to vigorously refute contrary thoughts.

Parent Session

This writer spoke with each student's parents — several in-person, others by phone. The conferences sought to enlighten the parents of the students involved in the project as to what was being accomplished as well as to explore with them their feelings about having a learning disabled child who will soon be leaving the high school and probably going on to higher education. Aware of the 5 qualities cited by McDavis, Nutter, and Lovett (1982) as being most helpful to parents of learning disabled children, this writer attempted to provide accurate information to the parents about their children, support their efforts to care for their children, provide encouragement despite the frustration they expressed feeling at times, show compassion, and help parents make decisions. Specific concerns, fears, and other issues they raised were fully discussed. Each parent was encouraged to contact this writer whenever they felt it necessary.

Month 4

Week 13

Problem-solving techniques were explored with each student. Using a method in a work authored by Fitzpatrick (1982) and endorsed by the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the strategy consisting of the following steps were presented: (a) State and define the problem, (b) List all possible solutions, (c) Choose what you believe is the best solu-

tion, (d) Try it, (e) Evaluate it, and (f) Try another if it's found to be inappropriate. The writer encouraged the students to note similarities and differences in the decision-making process. The term "proactive problem solving" (Rose, Friend, & Farnum, 1983) was introduced and defined. It was cited as a technique which, when used, had the effect of "nipping a problem in the bud," a vintage expression that was expounded upon. The students were urged to try to use the method during the coming week and report on its success at the next session.

A review of the colleges that the 2 seniors were applying to took place during this session. The colleges were contacted to be certain they received all the information they required for these students who were applying to the LD programs such as applications, untimed SAT scores, academic transcripts, an updated WAIS, and teacher recommendations.

Week 14

This writer reviewed the last session with each student and discussed the student's foray the past week into the use of the problem-solving strategy to "work through" problems that arose during that time. This writer elicited from each individual the benefits of using a strategy to solve problems as opposed to arbitrarily seeking a solution. The concept of the "strategy" was discussed in light of its particular benefit to the LD student.

Each student was encouraged during this session to discuss any issues that concerned them at this time. Discussion concerning the topics of

boyfriend-girlfriend relations, family problems, and after school employment ensued.

Week 15

After a brief review of the last session, a discussion was initiated concerning the topic of communication skills. Each student was introduced to the concepts of "assertiveness" and "aggressiveness" and examples were given that clarified their meanings. The students were then asked to explain the differences and to discuss the operational appropriateness of each as they might be applied in different situations. A fine line was shown to sometimes exist between the two. The terms "appropriately assertive" and "self-advocacy" were also introduced, defined, and explained in terms of the learning disabled student's need to properly advocate on his own behalf, in secondary school and even more so in college, for the services he requires and legislation provides for. This was generalized to apply to personal and employment settings as well as educational milieus. The writer modeled and, along with the student, role played a situation that demonstrated the terms introduced in this session. Each student was asked to practice the skill introduced during the coming week.

Week 16

The writer began the session by reviewing the past session's "assignment" for this day. In discussion, this writer again emphasized the need for students to be "appropriately assertive" in exacting from life what is rightfully theirs. Each student was encouraged, through counseling and re-

inforcement, to see the importance of self-advocacy especially insofar as it relates to his/her upcoming college experience. The change in their status from a high school student impacted by P.L. 94-142 to that of a college student impacted by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was discussed with each. In particular, the students were helped to understand that they will be expected, in a practical as well as legal sense, to advocate on their own behalf upon entering college. The students were also told that if, when in college, they decided they no longer needed or desired special services, the choice, in essence was theirs. This writer, however, did not advocate such a position. The students were encouraged to see themselves as their own best friend.

Month 5

Week 17

This writer discussed with each student the meaning of the term "goals." Students were asked to speak about the different goals they had for themselves and then asked to categorize them in terms of educational, social, and vocational goals.These were discussed in both long and short terms. The essence of this session concerned student responses apropos of how they had been, and currently were, seeking to attain those goals. This writer, with each student "in hand," explored educational goals, in particular, that the student had identified. Student generated dialogue about plans for college was a part of each discussion. Throughout this interchange this writer weighed and evaluated the responses of each student insofar as how

realistic each individual seemed to be with respect to goal setting and what this writer knew about the student's capabilities. This writer encouraged the individual, through active and animated discourse, to see the worth in identifying and establishing educational and other goals as well as developing a plan to achieve those goals. The student was asked to review and, if necessary, revise his list of goals and to discuss them with his/her parents.

Week 18

As a follow-up to the last session this writer reviewed with each student the discussion that they were asked to have with their parents in terms of long and short term goals. The writer encouraged the students to view their parents as individuals whose input was critical insofar as the attainment of goals was concerned. This writer then recollected for each student the statement that he/she had made the previous session regarding goal identification. In doing this, the writer sought to acknowledge each student' importance and subject of this writer's concern and interest. Each student was then challenged, with the support of this writer, to establish several short term goals that were specific, that the student believed he/she could reach, were achievable in terms of the individual's strengths and abilities, and measurable in terms of time and amount. An example of one such goal was that of a student increasing his/her academic performance in at least 2 subjects by one-half a letter grade (ie. a "B" to a "B+) on their third report card. The writer requested that the process of attaining each goal be stated in a positive way. That is, "I will..." as opposed to "I will at

tempt to..." This writer then explored, with each student, the benefits of imagery and visualization, as discussed by Fitzpatrick (1982). That is, the students were asked to create a "picture" in their mind's eye of what it would be like to achieve the goal. They were encouraged to sense the goal in terms of both sight and feel and to recreate that "picture," when necessary, to get themselves "back on track." Emphasis throughout this session was placed on this writer's stated belief that the student's have the ability to achieve realistic goals.

Week 19

Roadblocks, as factors that complicate one's seeking specific goal attainment, were discussed in terms of their normalcy and what all individuals have to deal with at some time or another as they move forward. Roadblocks that this writer considered included the student's lack of knowledge and information, lack of skills, inability to take risks and lack of social supports (Kish, 1991). Each student was encouraged at this time to "tap into" previously learned problem-solving and decision-making techniques. The term "low-frustration tolerance," a term coined by Ellis (1975), was introduced by this writer and identified as a factor that many individuals, including and especially learning disabled students, were burdened with but could, through counseling and patience, learn to deal with. This writer assisted the students to understand that goals are realistic if they are not in conflict with the student's levels of motivation and skill. Each student was again encouraged to view himself/herself as capable and in con-

trol, to a significant degree, of his/her own destiny. The students were inspired, using cognitive techniques, to understand that encountering a problem need not cause them to think poorly of themselves.

Week 20

Report cards had been distributed to each student in their homerooms and this writer utilized the time allotted for this session for discussion about grades and overall academic achievement. The focus of this writer's discourse with the students concerned the assistance they had been given by the resource room teachers and the influence those teacher's had in helping each student achieve the satisfactory grades that he/she did. This was in response to some of the student's stated flirtations with the idea of terminating resource room help. This writer discussed with each student concerns that each may of had relating to parent expectations. Since each person's grades were quite satisfactory and some excellent, the interchange was generally positive. The impact of grades on college admissions were discussed. Each student was encouraged to discuss his/her report card grades with his parents.

Parent Session:

This writer, once again, met with some of the parents of the students involved in the project and spoke to the others by phone about their children's participation in the project. Due to the timing of this contact with parents, the topic of report card grades was of paramount importance to each. Their concern was primarily related to the post-secondary school ed-

ucation of their children. This writer discussed with each parent the fact that many colleges, including some of this country's finest, have programs designed especially for students with learning disabilities. This writer then spoke in greater detail with them about a specific program offered at Hofstra University, a nearby college as well as others at more distant universities. They were given information about the added costs of such programs as well as what role they can expect to play in helping their children prepare and finalize college choices. Additionally the change in their child's legal status from one impacted by PL 94-142 to one impacted by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as a college student was discussed. This writer sought to assuage the parents' stated fears that their children might not gain admission to any colleges because of their disabilities. They were advised realistically, however, that many of the best programs are extremely competitive and that students who apply must be able to demonstrate that they are capable of achieving.

Month 6

Week 21

The writer discussed with each student the need and importance of developing skills that would enable him to monitor his academic performance as well as be able to periodically evaluate to what degree his academic goals are being met. The students were advised to keep a folder for each subject into which graded examinations and homework assignments were placed. Additionally, each individual was encouraged to maintain a record of all

test and homework grades, in a format demonstrated by this writer, on the cover of each folder within easy access and view. Students were further advised to have their academic goals recorded on paper to be referred to periodically. Lastly, each student was urged to avoid judging themselves in comparison to others, but rather in terms of their own capabilities. This writer helped students to understand that comparing themselves to others may result in unnecessary frustration and the undermining of their self esteem.

With each junior, this writer began an individualized variation of the "junior groups" that were now functioning with all juniors in the mainstream. The purpose of these groups, in which eleventh graders participate for 4 sessions, is to give students information concerning the college search and and an overall "picture" of the application and admission process. He addressed the issues of how they might begin to identify colleges, choose appropriate programs as well as when and how to apply. The writer responded to all student questions and assured them that he would be available throughout the entire application process with whatever assistance they required. They were also advised that their resource room teachers would assist in all ways necessary.

Week 22

A review of the last session took place and discussion ensued as to how to know when help is needed. Each student was encouraged to understand that when grades began to fall short of what they expected for themselves

the time was proper to ask for assistance. This writer discussed with the students that while in the resource room program, their teachers would help them monitor their progress and assist when necessary. Referring to a former session on assertiveness, this writer urged them to appropriately claim their right to the assistance of their teachers, counselors, and others when they felt it necessary. A role-play situation was created to demonstrate such a circumstance. This writer indicated to each student the importance of mastering this kind of activity, especially insofar as it applies to success in college.

This writer, in his ongoing discussion with the students about goals, thought it appropriate during this session to explore the issue of a student not reaching his/her goal. Told that rarely do people achieve all of their goals, students were advised not to cast blame upon themselves. Rather, they were encouraged to think about why the goal may not have been reached. They were urged to question whether the goal was unrealistic or if other events got in the way. Regardless, the student was encouraged to learn from the experience and move on.

For the juniors, this writer continued to follow-up on the junior group session. He made it more relevant for the LD student.

Week 23

The topics of interpersonal relationships and social skills were treated during this session. Taking into account the claim that learning disabled individuals often demonstrate socialization problems (Hallahan & Kauffman,

1991), this writer discussed with each student the importance of developing and maintaining good social relationships with others. Using the work of Bryan and Bryan, as cited in Hallahan and Kauffman, as his guide, this writer considered 5 areas of concern pertaining to the socialization of learning disabled students in his discussion with each. They included those of social norm violation, social cognition, role-taking skills, referential communication and classroom behavior. Role-play and visual aids were used to help the students improve their reading of social cues. Problem-solving in the social realm was addressed. Making and keeping friends, dating, and developing working relationships with college instructors were examples used.

The term "ongoing collaborative relationships," one coined by Dr. Sanford Weinstein of New York University's School of Education, was introduced and explained to the students. It was discussed in the context of the benefits that each student could derive from nurturing such contacts. Care was taken by this writer so as not to communicate the sense that these relationships were one-sided and solely self-serving in nature. It was explained that they, if they were to "work," would have to be of mutual benefit to all individuals involved.

Week 24

The students and this writer met together in a group to discuss the last several sessions and to pool common experiences. The session began with brief introductions in that most of the students already knew one another.

This writer began the session by asking the students if they believed that they, as individuals with a learning disability, were really different than others they knew who did not have a learning disability. Responding to the students' claim that in all but a few ways are they the same, this writer encouraged them to elaborate. The students agreed that the fundamental difference between they and others is that it takes them longer and they must work harder than others to achieve similar results. This session was largely designed as a followup to the last meeting that each individual had with this writer. It was his aim to enhance student confidence in social situations by using the basic cognitive principles of self-talk (ie. "I can do it.") and the challenging of irrational beliefs (ie. "If I say something stupid, I'll be terribly embarrassed."). Group role-play exercises were employed to highlight basic points. This writer encouraged students to identify and isolate self-defeating and irrational thoughts and supplant them with cognitions that are productive and empowering. The students were reminded of the positive results that can be accrued by replacing negative cognitions with those that were positive. The ABCs of combating irrational thinking were reviewed.

As the session progressed, students were encouraged to share their thoughts about school, special placement, and any other issues they wished to discuss. Juniors were reminded of the need to register for the upcoming SATs and Achievement Tests. They were also told of their right to take the test untimed if they wished. The session concluded with this writer asking

each student to comment on something that he was looking forward to. Examples included obtaining a driver's license, going to the junior and senior proms, and summer travel plans. The exchange was animated.

Month 7

Week 25

This writer briefly reviewed last week's session with the students. After considering the work of McIntosh, Vaughn and Zaragoza (1991) who discuss the issue of how counseling can allay the fears, especially those of failure, that learning disabled students often possess, this writer began exploring with each student such concerns. With each junior, he encouraged the student to try to identify his/her greatest concern about the process of choosing, researching, and applying to colleges the following year. With each senior, both of whom had already gone through the process, were accepted at schools, and would be attending college next year, the writer encouraged them to consider and discuss whatever fears they might have concerning their upcoming academic experience. As the students raised and spoke about their apprehensions, this writer actively but sensitively retorted with statements that challenged the thoughts underlying the fears they expressed. He then demonstrated to each individual how to identify such negative thoughts and subsequently undermine their impact by challenging their veracity. Throughout the remainder of the session, this writer encouraged each student to practice the technique of identifying the fear-provoking thought, challenging it, and replacing it with a cognition that allays

such fears and enables the individual to move forward. The students were given the "homework assignment" of practicing what they learned during this session. They were also advised that this writer would be meeting with their resource room teachers and that he and each student would briefly discuss those meetings during the next session.

Conference with Resource Room Teachers

This writer arranged, with the director of special education at the high school, for himself to attend a department meeting. Permission granted, this writer took advantage of the opportunity to explain to the teachers, most of whom were assigned to work with those students partaking in the intervention, the "progress" being made with each individual. Discussion about the transitioning of high school students to the college and university level ensued with this writer highlighting the implications of the transition in terms of PL 94-142 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. This writer also introduced the teachers to the Tools for Transition (1992) program. More importantly, however, this writer listened to the comments they made regarding their perception of the each student's "progress." The teachers were asked to cite any changes, positive or negative, that they could identify as being directly related to the weekly sessions involving this writer and the student. Each was praised by him for the work he/she was doing with the student and was encouraged to present feedback to him regarding the proceeding intervention.

Week 26

With the eleventh year students this writer discussed different types of college programs designed to assist students that have a learning disability. He identified and discussed Landmark College in Putney Vermont as one solely devoted to the needs of the learning disabled student. Other programs at "regular" institutions of higher learning were addressed with the students. These included mainstream programs with an LD component (ie. University of Vermont) as well as Basic Studies (ie. Boston University and General Studies (ie. Adelphi University) programs. Summer transition programs were also discussed. In each situation this writer cited specific colleges, both 2 and 4 year schools, that offered such options. Additionally, he introduced students to a work by Sclafani and Lynch (1992) that detailed, in a comprehensive format, institutions of higher learning throughout the country that offer programs for students who have a learning disability. It was suggested by this writer that the students obtain the book. Each student was, once again, assured that this writer would work with them to identify and apply to appropriate institutions based largely on their own needs and desires. The students were promised by this writer that they would gain admission to a college of their choice.

This writer discussed with the seniors their finalized college plans for the Fall. Each student was encouraged to view himself/herself as an intellectual and academic achiever who has, by having been accepted by the University of Denver and St. John's University respectively, proven him

self/herself to be both capable and successful. Further discussion about the nature of the supportive programs at both schools ensued. This writer stressed the need for each student to utilize the LD services of the institution. They were reminded that support personnel at the college level will usually not seek them out if they failed to request assistance and that, in essence, they would have to be the one who initiate contact. Both seniors were advised that the next session would be their last as a participant in the intervention. They were told that they would be asked to respond to a questionnaire and, once again, take the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory. All students were encouraged to speak with their parents about the subjects discussed during this session.

Week 27

Continued discussion about college admissions took place with each eleventh year student. In response to questions that several students raised, as well as a followup to last week's session, this writer identified additional colleges that have LD programs. The University of Arizona, Clark University, The University of Georgia, and The University of Virginia were several of those named. The writer explained and discussed with each student the additional procedures that are a necessary part of most admission processes. Students were told of the need to send to each school that they were interested in applying to a letter requesting an application and guidebook describing the school. Additionally, this writer discussed with each the necessity of completing an application which frequently required

them to write an essay, appear for an interview and request selected teachers to send letters of recommendation to the colleges they apply to. The students were also told of the need to have the Educational Testing Service forward their SAT scores to the colleges. Shortly after responding to student questions, this writer demonstrated to them how to write to a college for an application. Using Rogers technique of "unconditional positive regard," ego building and ongoing assurance was generously offered. This writer, as before, sought to assure the students that assistance would be provided to them

Senior students were administered the evaluation questionnaire (see Appendix C) as well as the Coopersmith Self Esteem Inventory. In the time remaining, each student was asked to have a parent present at the following session. They were reminded that the final grades they received in their current courses were important and would be forwarded to the college they apply to. Each was advised to avoid "senioritis" for the relatively short time that was left in the academic year.

Week 28

The focus remained on college admissions with the juniors. This writer targeted the completion of the application document itself by the student as the goal of this session. Each student was given a copy of a Hofstra University application. In tandem with this writer, the student reviewed the application in detail stopping at various points throughout to highlight areas of particular importance such as the "box" requesting the student to

note if he desired special services. Suggestions were made by this writer that each student read and then re-read directions, print or use a typewriter, and make sure that all required questions had been responded to. Students were urged to see the application as a vital part of their personal presentation to the colleges and that care should be taken in presenting themselves. Each student was encouraged to make copies of all applications, respond in pencil to the queries, and consult with either this writer or their resource room teachers for an "accuracy check." They were told to then transpose their responses onto the original document for submission to the school. With the brief time remaining, each student was advised to begin thinking about schools they might wish to visit during the upcoming summer vacation.

This writer met individually with both seniors and their parents at this final session. He reviewed and discussed with both the past months of the intervention. The students were again advised that they needed to complete the year in good standing. They were told that poor final grades would be frowned upon by the colleges that accepted them. Each student and his/her parent was offered whatever further assistance he/she felt this writer could provide presently or after graduation.

The parent remained after the session to complete the evaluation questionnaire (see Appendix E).

Month 8

Week 29

This session addressed the subject of the college visit and admission interview. Each student was advised by this writer to view the college they were planning on visiting from the perspective of a "regular" student who may require additional services in order to fully succeed. Students were urged to be cognizant of the school's size in terms of numbers of students and campus layout, physical facilities, indicators of a school's social climate (ie. fraternities and sororities), cleanliness of the dorms, palatability of the cafeteria cuisine, etc. The students were also encouraged by this writer to inquire about the services available to learning disabled students and how students obtain such services. If feasible, each student was urged to learn the names of and speak with other LD students. Emphasis was placed on having the student view himself/herself as a consumer of the university's services and as one who needs to choose carefully before committing himself/herself to a particular campus.

This writer discussed the likelihood that a college will want to interview a prospective entrant into their learning disabilities program. He addressed the need of the student to employ cognitive methods to maintain a relatively low level of anxiety during the interview procedure. Techniques using "self-talk" were encouraged and practiced by each student during mock interviews conducted by this writer. The student was furthermore encouraged to devise questions that they might like to ask the interviewer during

the encounter. Feedback was sensitively given to each, by this writer, concerning the appropriateness of the questions. Questions were reworded when necessary. Each student was encouraged to be "appropriately assertive" during the interview and to view himself/herself as one with a processing problem, rather than as one with an intellectual problem. Just prior to the close of the session, each student was asked by this writer to compose a short "personal statement" to be discussed during the following session.

Week 30

Prior to reviewing last week's session with each student, this writer briefly discussed the report card grades about to be issued in their homerooms. The students who had established as their goal the increase of at least one-half a letter grade in a minimum of 2 subjects achieved success. They were praised and encouraged by this writer who also pointed out that realistic goals are indeed attainable. After briefly reviewing last week's session, this writer focused his and each student's attention on the application essay and the personal statement that are frequently a part of the applicant's admissions package. Despite the anxiety that this part of the application seemed to engender in each student, this writer encouraged them to view it as a "user-friendly" tool that would provide valuable information to the college. Additionally, it was shown to be an excellent opportunity for the student to "talk" directly to the college's admission committee and help them to see the applicant as a thinking and feeling person, rather than sim-

ply a set of impersonal statistics as one tends to find in other parts of the application. The students were encouraged to keep their work simple and direct and to respond to the mandate to write the essay or personal statement in a positive, be-yourself way. Various topics, apropos of the essay, were discussed as was the appropriate length and style of the document. This writer's experience as a high school guidance counselor as well as the work of Gelban, Kubale, and Schorr (1986) served as resource matter for this discussion.

After reviewing the personal statements that the students were asked to compose for this session, this writer encouraged them to respond to one of two essay questions common to several college applications. From the Dickinson College application the students were asked, "What experience or event has had a significant impact on your life?" From the New York University application the students were asked, "Discuss some issue of personal, local, or national concern and its importance to you?" In collaboration with the resource room teachers, this writer asked the students to seek out their respective teacher's assistance in the preparation of their response. This writer indicated to each student that he would review their work at the next session.

Week 31

The writer reviewed the student's college application essay and made comments appropriate to each individual's work. Praise and support of the student's effort was bountiful. The remainder of this session focused on a

verbal review of the practicum intervention nearing completion. The students were encouraged to speak freely about their feelings regarding their participation in the intervention. Questions that the students asked were responded to. Most notably were those related to the continuation of the "program." The students were told that although it would no longer be a component of a university project, it would, in essence, remain ongoing. Each student was advised that the next session would be the last session of the project and that a brief evaluation questionnaire would be given to him/her during that session for him/her to respond to. Additionally, he/she will once again be requested to fill out the CSI inventory as he/she did at the inception of the project. This writer requested of each student that he/she invite his/her parent(s) or guardian(s) to join this writer and the student for a discussion during the last half of the next session.

Week 32

An additional 20 minutes were added to the regular 40 minute period to accomplish the tasks planned for this session. In several cases where parents where unable to take the time during the school day, this counselor, the student, and his parent met at 7 a.m., prior to the beginning of the school day. While each student dutifully completed the student evaluation form (see Appendix C) and responded to the statements on the CSI, his/her parent completed the parent evaluation form (see Appendix E) and, in some cases, discussed their responses with this writer. Upon receiving the documents from the student and his/her parent(s) or guardian(s), this writer en-

gaged those present in dialogue concerning the intervention about to terminate. A review by this writer of the student's accomplishments and prospects for future success was given as part of his continuing effort to encourage the student to view himself in a positive way. He also addressed the importance of the adult caretaker's role in helping the student to make important decisions about his/her future. Both student and parent were advised, as before, that this writer will be available to them, along with the student's resource room teacher, during the upcoming senior year to assist in any way with the college admissions process.

Conference with Resource Room Teachers

This writer met individually with each student's resource room teacher for the purpose of obtaining their evaluation of the practicum project and the student's "progress." Approximately 30 minutes was reserved for each encounter. The teachers chose to discuss their responses to the evaluation questionnaire (see Appendix D) rather than reply in writing. Their responses were recorded by this writer.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The problem in this writer's work setting that he sought to correct was that despite the significant and increasing number of college-bound students who were classified by the Committee on Special Education as learning disabled, there did not exist, in any form, an effective, systematic and comprehensive approach targeted at preparing either they or their families for the postsecondary school higher education experience. In essence, their special and unique needs were not being taken into consideration by any department or individuals within this writer's work setting.

The solution strategy employed by this writer was to establish a 32-week protocol of preplanned sessions for selected, CSE identified, learning disabled high school juniors and seniors. Each student met with this writer individually for a period of 30 minutes throughout the 8 month course of the practicum intervention. Throughout the intervention, each student's parent(s) or guardian(s) met periodically with this writer for the purpose of discussing issues related to the meetings being held with their children. They were encouraged at each encounter to discuss whatever concerns they had regarding their child's present and future academic status. Addition-

ally, this writer occasionally met with the student's resource room teacher to keep him/her appraised of the progress of the intervention as well as to cull from them information and insights that might prove helpful and add to the success of the intervention.

Results

Outcome 1: The learning disabled students will have experienced approximately 8 months of transition counseling and be able to express what benefits they derived from the effort. They will be able to explain their role in providing for a smooth and relatively anxiety-free transition from high school to postsecondary school life.

In responding to the forced choice sentence completion inventory three out of the six students queried indicated that all twelve sessions surveyed were "helpful." One student specified that all sessions other than "Learning to recognize 'social cues' and develop interpersonal and social skills" was "helpful." Another student expressed that all sessions surveyed other than "Sessions in which I was taught how to challenge negative and 'downing' thoughts I sometimes have about myself..." were "helpful." A third student denoted that all but two surveyed sessions were "helpful." Those sessions found to be "not helpful" were "Sessions in which I was taught how to challenge negative and 'downing' thoughts I sometimes have about myself..." and "The effect of my parent(s) meeting with Mr. Weiss on several occasions this year was generally..." It should be noted that concerning the last statement, the student chose to qualify his response with the

statement to this writer that the meetings that the writer had with his father really hadn't made a difference.

In subjectively discussing their responses to the practicum intervention the students reacted to three questions (see Appendix C) posed by this writer. All of the students clearly indicated their belief that the program was of benefit to them and most were able to state in what specific ways they gained from it. Responses ranged from "I learned a lot about colleges that I didn't know before" as verbalized by one student to "I realize that...I am part of a group including you [this writer], my parents, and myself and if everyone else does what their supposed to do and I don't I might not be able to go to college at all." Several common "threads" were noted by this writer in the comments made by the students. Virtually all of the them indicated that the most helpful sessions were those that specifically treated issues related to the college admission process as it impacts them personally. Additionally, learning that many popular colleges had special supportive programs for learning disabled students was expressed to be a highlight of these sessions (ie. "I really didn't think I'd be able to get into a 'good' college like some of my friends"). Students also indicated their belief that the cognitive techniques they learned were, and will continue to be, most helpful.

Using "self-talk" to challenge and refute irrational and self-defeating cognitions (ie. "I'm not good at math and never will be") was cited as being an important component of the intervention experience (ie. "I found that

when I learned to say more positive things to myself I felt better and did better work"). Lastly, their comments clearly and individually expressed their appreciation at having the opportunity to meet regularly, over an extended period of time, with a strong advocate who believed in them (ie. "For all these months, I never felt that I didn't have someone who understood where I was coming from").

Outcome 2: All of the students involved will have experienced a positive change in self-esteem as indicated by a minimum increase of at least 5 points between the pre and post intervention administration of the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory.

Contrary to the prediction of a 5 point minimum increase of the total score between the pre and post intervention administration of the protocol made by this author for all students, only three achieved gains as predicted. Two students showed an increase of less than the predicted minimum of 5 points, and one student experienced a surprisingly large decrease in scores between the pre and post intervention administration. Table 1 provides documentation.

In addition to presenting total scores, this writer decided to also document the subscale scores achieved by each student. The test author (Coopersmith, 1981) maintains that "the subscales allow for variances in perceptions of self-esteem in different areas of experience" (p. 2). It is instructive to note the variation in the subscale scores of each student. This is particularly true of those students whose pre and post intervention total

scores differed substantially. This writer will fully discuss his perception of the variations in both subscale and total scores within the discussion section of this report.

Table 1

Pre and Post Intervention Scores on The Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory

		Subscale and Total Scores				
Students		General	Social	Home	School	Total
#1						
	pre	16	7	5	1	58
	post	18	7	7	3	70
#2						
	pre	25	5	8	6	88
	post	26	8	8	6	96
#3						
	pre	22	8	7	5	84
	post	24	8	8	6	92
#4						
	pre	19	8	7	5	78
	post	21	8	6	6	82
#5						
	pre	23	7	8	5	86
	post	24	8	8	4	88
#6						
	pre	23	8	8	6	90
	post	26	7	4	4	82

Note. Full subscale headings are, as described by the SEI publisher, General Self, Social Self-Peers, Home-Parents, and School-Academic. Maximum subscale scores are 26, 8, 8, 8 respectively. Maximum total of scores is 100.

Outcome 3: Each student's resource room teacher will understand that transition is an important phase in a learning disabled adolescent's life. They will understand the important role they play in that individual's transition process.

The evaluative procedure conducted by this writer with each of the student's resource room teachers took place in this writer's office and lasted approximately 20 minutes each. The evaluative instrument was the Resource Room Teacher Evaluation Form (see Appendix D). The teachers, with time at a premium, expressed their appreciation at being able to discuss the items on the protocol rather than having to write out their responses. To log their comments, this writer took brief notes as he and the special education teacher spoke. The items and format of the evaluation document were used as a guide. What follows is a summary and composite of their responses to the questions presented:

1. All of the resource room teachers stated their belief that the construct of "transition," as it applies to their student's projected change of status from that of a high school student to that of college student was, in fact, a very real phenomenon and one that was of concern to them. Each also discussed his/her feelings that their students benefited significantly from the transition counseling that took place over the course of the past 8 months. The most frequently spoken about benefit was what they perceived of as an increase in the student's level of self-understanding and self-esteem. Several of them cited indirect benefits in academic growth as the

chief byproduct of the intervention. Others cited personal growth and interpersonal skill development as the area that evidenced the most significant gain. A number of the teachers related their satisfaction at witnessing an increased sense of focus and direction in their students. Virtually all of the instructors discussed their belief in the importance of their students having been exposed to data about the college admissions process and how it impacts the learning disabled student. They stated that the most valuable outcome of the sessions that dealt with college admissions was their student's understanding that admission to a college of their choice was not only conceivable but probable. As one teacher stated concerning a student she had worked with for three years, "This year, for the first time, M. began thinking about the consequences of what she does daily...Understanding that she will be able to go to college seemed to make a big difference in the way she saw herself."

2. Each resource room teacher spoke convincingly of how, in their opinion, the transition counseling that took place during the 8 month intervention helped to prepare their students for the college admissions process. The counseling that the students were exposed to for the first time forced several teachers, as they so indicated to this writer, to think and discuss the postsecondary school options that their students had available to them, college included. As before, a number of the instructors spoke of their students appearing to have greater confidence in themselves which tended to reduce their fear of being overwhelmed by the admissions pro-

cess. Regardless of how tepidly it had been described by this writer, one could not escape the fact that this process was global in scope. Several indicated that their students expressed feelings of comfort in the knowledge that they would be assisted by both this writer and their teachers through the admissions process. Most of the individuals with whom this writer spoke communicated their feeling that the work that they were doing with the learning disabled students would have the greatest impact on that student's initial success as a college student. They felt strongly that they and this writer played a complimentary role on behalf of the student. Collectively, the teachers seemed secure in their belief that the six college-bound LD students who participated in the intervention were better prepared for what lie ahead of them than those LD students of similar capabilities who did not have this experience.

3. The special educators interviewed each took the position that all students who were capable of going to college, and were willing to explore their prospects of doing so, should be exposed to transition counseling or programming of some nature. Several of the teachers recalled having read about "transitioning" in the professional literature that their department subscribes to and believed such intervention should be a part of the total high school program for these students.

4. In response to this writer's request that they express whatever ideas they may have regarding modification of the program as documented, replies were forthcoming. Several teachers expressed the viewpoint that

the transition program should involve multiple "systems" within the school. In essence, they felt that it should involve all departments within the school. Others discussed their feeling that all CSE designated students should be exposed to a "transitioning program" regardless of whether they are college-bound or not. One individual was particularly strong in his belief that the student who was going to enter "the world of work" was in perhaps greater need for transition counseling than others who were continuing their education. To successfully accomplish the task of easing the transition of special education students, whether it be into the job market or higher education, several teachers expressed their view that educators should be offered inservice programs to prepare them for the task. Another recommendation expressed was that "transition programs" should be prepared and customized to fit the needs of each student in the same way that the Individual Education Plan (IEP) was constructed for each of their students. Although the individual felt that this writer's prototype of a transitional counseling program was "a real benefit to each student involved" he felt that a "more individualized" approach, based on a student's unique and specific needs might better serve the student with a disability.

Outcome 4: All of the parents of the students involved will have come to better understand the process of change and be able to predict with some degree of confidence what is to be expected and how to best deal with it.

The parent evaluation conferences, the last one-on-one meeting this

writer had with the parents took place in his guidance office and lasted approximately 30 minutes each. Each parent appeared eager to visit with this writer to discuss his/her child's practicum intervention experience as well as, considering that this writer was also the student's guidance counselor, his/her academic progress this past year. Utilizing the Parent Evaluation Form (see Appendix E) as his guide, this writer presented the 4 questions to the parents, one at a time, and recorded in the form of brief notes, their responses. Documentation of their replies, pertaining only to the intervention, appears as follows:

1. Each parent indicated that they believed their child profited from the intervention experience. The parents of the Juniors, those who would not be applying to colleges until the next academic year, expressed satisfaction that their children had a particular person at school who would advocate on their behalf and to whom they could turn if they had problems or concerns. When asked to differentiate between this writer's former involvement with the student as a guidance counselor and his work with the student this past year, most had little difficulty in doing so. Clearly, the difference, as they understood it to be, was in the regularity and focus of the student's visits to this writer's office as well as the closeness of the relationship that developed between he/she and his/her counselor. In praising the experience their children had, several expressed their belief that their children seemed to feel more positive about school and that, generally, they were easier to deal with at home. One individual spoke of his child as

being more responsible and accountable for his actions and not as prone to blame others for his problems.

The parents also spoke of the students as becoming more "future oriented" and concerned about what direction their lives will take after they graduate from high school. The most commonly expressed feeling, however, was that their children seemed to feel better about themselves. The parents indicated to this writer that, from their perspective, the increase in their child's self-esteem was the most important benefit of the intervention. Several individuals discussed their belief that their children seemed to feel more comfortable with their disability and, to paraphrase one parent, his daughter was now able to see herself as a student with a learning handicap as opposed to a handicapped student.

A number of individuals addressed the issue of their children using the cognitive techniques they learned during months of weekly interaction with this writer. Several related their offspring's frequent verbalization of the phrase "what's the worst thing that can happen" as a coping tool in stressful situations. Cognitive counseling, when mentioned and elaborated on by this writer, drew praise from most of the parents. They expressed their view that it was an efficacious method of dealing with the negative feelings, especially of a personal nature, that their children admittedly experienced more frequently than other children they knew who were not learning disabled, including their child's peers and siblings.

The parents of the 2 seniors were firm in their belief that their chil-

dren benefited from the intervention in terms of the support they received during the college admissions process. One of the parents expressed the importance to his son of having had someone available to whom he could ask personal questions regarding his applying to a program for learning disabled students at a local college. The parent explained that in a setting different than the one established by this writer for this practicum, the student would have found himself in a heterogeneous group of average to above average achievers and perhaps too self-conscious to have asked the questions and participate in his own admissions experience as he did. This parent further discussed his son's coming to terms during the application process with the prospect that he might not get into the college of his choice. He claimed that the student's participation in the intervention was, to a significant degree, responsible for that resolution. Although the parents of the other student always believed that she would be admitted to a college, they expressed their feeling that their child's involvement in the intervention was largely responsible for her being admitted to her first choice school.

2. When queried as to what each, as a parent of a learning disabled adolescent, gained from the intervention experience, several spoke in terms of the support they received from this writer. Some of their statements, attesting to the difficulties they, at times, had with their children as young people in throes of adolescence, were impact laden and most positive. Individual parents of both the juniors and seniors also discussed the

value of having been made aware, relatively early, of the process of college admission as it pertained to the learning disabled student, an area each indicated he/she knew nothing about. One parent, in elaborating on the above, spoke of the benefit of knowing, via the intervention strategy, of what was expected of their children at each stage of the admission process. By being aware of filing and application deadlines, important test (ie. SAT) dates, recommendation letters, and other matters, the parent stated that he/she was able to work with his/her child in making sure that all requirements were met. Several parents discussed the benefits they derived from the intervention. Among them was learning what they could expect of their children from an emotional and affective perspective. One parent of a graduating senior stated, for example, that the knowledge that her child's lack of motivation and, at times, inertia in completing and forwarding applications to colleges was not uncommon and may have been a manifestation of his learning disability, helped her deal with her child in a more tempered manner than she might have otherwise. At various times throughout the conferences with parents, the benefit of knowing that a vehicle, the practicum intervention, was in place to assist them in the making of important decisions and to guide them through an environment largely unfamiliar to most of them was effectively communicated to this writer.

3. Each parent interviewed expressed his/her belief that transitional counseling should be offered to other learning disabled students. When invited to elaborate on this issue, two parents spoke of the need of

the learning disabled student to be introduced, in a paced fashion, to "life" after high school. Another expressed her opinion that learning disabled students and their families need frequent access to their counselor about college admission as well as other problems and that unless there exists a structured way of providing such access, as there was with her child, LD students will tend to avoid or forget to procure it.

4. Parent responses to the question asking them to recommend changes in the intervention if it were to be conducted again were generally not forthcoming. This writer, however, pursued the issue with each and was able to generate several responses. One individual felt that regularly scheduled group meetings with the parents of LD students would be helpful. Her feeling was that parents could learn from one another. Another parent suggested intervention-style counseling throughout the years that the child was in high school. Her thought was that the special emotional needs of the LD student were such that regularly scheduled counseling was necessary. During another conference, a parent recommended the employment of a "special needs counselor" to work only with the learning disabled and other "special needs students." She explained that having experienced the intervention developed and conducted by this writer who, in essence, provided the service of a "special needs counselor," it would be in the best interests of students and parents to be serviced by a counselor whose specialization was the "special needs" child.

Discussion

A review of the results indicate to this writer that the practicum intervention was generally successful in terms of the predicted outcomes. Although this writer is inclined to admit that the student responses on the evaluation tool were the most important because they were the target population, he is reluctant to do so. The reality is, however, that one must view all three populations, the LD student, the student's resource room teacher, and the student's parents as equally important components in the transition scheme. It cannot rightfully be said that environmental support for the student making the transition is any less critical to the success of that transition than the student's own level of motivation to participate. It remains true, however, that the individual student is the one who must experience and eventually make the transition from high school to college or work and that it is with him/her that this writer spent the preponderance of his time during these past 8 months.

Student responses on the objective part of the Student Evaluation Form were generally consistent with what this writer expected in that many of the items were based on literature cited earlier in this paper, as well as what this writer, based on his own experience counseling the learning disabled student, felt he/she would most want and need to know regarding his/her movement from high school to college. Additionally, the wording used in each item lent itself well to being responded to in the affirmative. For example, it would have been highly unlikely that, based on the content

and wording of item number 7, which read, "The discussions we had in which we talked about problem-solving and decision-making strategies were...," a student would have chosen an answer other than "helpful."

The results on the Coopersmith Self Esteem Inventory administered to each student, however, were somewhat unexpected and important to discuss. Initially, this writer was struck by the generally high total scores achieved by the students on the protocol with four pre-intervention scores well in excess of 80, one score of 78, and another of 58. This writer's surprised reaction to the scores were in light of norms, albeit dated, as reported by Ketchum and Morse (cited in Coopersmith, 1981) based on a combined representative sample of 87 city and suburban eleventh year high school students, which placed the mean for them on the SEI at 57.3. Addressing the claim of Coopersmith that high scores on the SEI correspond to high self esteem, he asserts that the means of such scores have generally been in the range of from 70 to 80. Additionally, he states that "the upper quartile generally can be considered indicative of high self esteem, the lower quartile...of low self esteem, and the interquartile range generally indicative of medium self esteem." All initial scores achieved by the students except one were in the upper quartile. The outstanding student achieved in the interquartile range.

This writer, in considering the total scores on the SEI protocol, found them to be rather remarkable considering the body of literature, albeit inconclusive, according to Huntington and Bender (1993), attesting to

the relatively poor self perception held by many learning disabled adolescents. In other characteristics as well, including interpersonal skills and emotional well-being, this writer found the intervention population of students to contrast with the norm as exemplified in part by the "Social Self-Peers" subscale scores which were notably high. For example, Reiff and deFur (1992) report that "Some adjustment problems...emanate from secondary effects of learning disabilities such as low self-esteem, stress, learned helplessness, and expectations of failure" (p. 240). Additionally, those writing on behalf of the Heath Resource Center (1987) assert that repeated school failures can lead to poor self-esteem as well as the individual's inability to sustain interpersonal relationships that, in turn, can lead to other problems. Huntington and Bender cite "higher anxiety levels, more frequent and more serious bouts of depression, and higher rates of suicide among learning disabled adolescents than one would expect to find among those without disabilities" (p. 159). It is important to note, however, that these researchers qualify their remarks by claiming that studies in these areas are "fairly rare."

Although total scores appear high on the SEI among the students who participated in the intervention, this writer was struck by the "School-Academic" subscale scores. They were, when compared to other subscale scores, markedly lower, with one student's pre and post intervention score noted as exceptionally low. Again this writer turns to the recent work of Huntington and Bender (1993) who explain that a highly refined under

standing of self-concept reveals a global self-concept referring to the view that one has of oneself as well as an academic self-concept, a term originated by Chapman (1988), which refers to one's perception of himself or herself as a student. They state that "The adolescents with LD scored significantly lower than the nondisabled adolescents in terms of academic self-concept" (p. 160). In this regard, if this writer can risk pretension by assuming that "academic self-concept" can be roughly interpreted to mean the same as what the "School-Academic" subscale implies, the intervention students seemed highly consistent with what the literature reports.

Clearly contrary to the expected outcome of an increase in the score on the CSI between the first and second administration was that of student identified as number 6. This student's total score dropped by a remarkable 8 points. His "Home-Parents" subscale reduction from a pre-intervention score of 8 to a post-intervention score of 4 was not a surprise to this writer in light of the upheaval he experienced within his family during the months of his participation. The combination of his mother abandoning the home, his father leaving for the city, and he and his younger sister being forced to take up residence in their grandparents domicile "played havoc" with the the student's life as well as the CSI results. Considering the work of Mellard and Hazel (1992) which underscored the degree to which many students with learning disabilities have difficulty handling pressure as well as adjusting to changes in routine, a finding other than what was revealed by the scores would have been surprising.

In a study of the counseling needs of handicapped high school students, McDavis, Nutter, and Lovett (1982) revealed that when asked to name the five most helpful services of their counselors, ranked first among them was "gave me information." It was, therefore, not surprising for this writer to find, in Part II of the Student Evaluation Form, that each student at one point or another in his/her subjective responses, cited the discussions they had with this writer about college admissions to be among the most "helpful" topics. During these sessions, this writer revealed to the students various statistics cited in the literature concerning the vast increase in the number of LD students who can be found on America's campuses (Satcher & Dooley-Dickey, 1991; Houck, Asselin, Troutman, & Arrington, 1992). Both percentages and actual numbers of students enrolled were quoted. Although visibly impressed with the statistics, the students seemed more interested in the factors, as cited by Vogel and Adelman (1992),that showed that LD students who were highly motivated to succeed and took full advantage of the comprehensive support services offered by the college, including special academic advisors, had virtually the same graduation rate as the non-LD students.

The opinions and evaluative responses of the resource room teachers who worked with the intervention participants were generally in agreement with this writer's expectation. Comments by these special educators attesting to increases in self-esteem and the quality of interpersonal relationships seemed consistent with this writer's use of cognitive counseling and the lit-

erature (Ellis, 1975; Mellard & Hazel, 1992; Erchul, 1993) that attests to its usefulness especially in the modification of issues related to self-esteem and and social competencies.

This writer saw as his mission during the practicum the need to keep these professionals fully aware of the work that he was doing with the students and to foster their understanding of the critical role they play in the transition process. He also required the periodic feedback of these special educators in order to "fine tune" his ongoing sessions with the students. Consequently, he sought to maintain fluid communication throughout the course of the endeavor. The result was, as indicated by the instructors, a feeling of complementing one another's service on behalf of the students.

The decision of this writer to include parents in this practicum intervention was based largely on his belief that students do not mature within a vacuum. Children's learning experiences, he feels, are not confined to classrooms but take place within communities and home settings. Despite what educators may believe about their own influence on students, they must understand, as maintained by Takanishi (1993), that "it is to their parents over peers, teachers, religious counselors...that they [students] would turn first about the really important issues" (p. 461). In particular, this writer believes, and research (Eccles, J. & Harold, R., 1993) strongly supports, his contention that parents play a profound role in both the education and socioemotional development of their children throughout the school years. Additionally, Christenson, Rounds, and Gorney (1992) cite several

recurring findings that have been identified from parent involvement research over the past two decades. They are:

> First, regardless of educational level, ethnic background, or income level, parents want their children to be successful in school; however they do not know how to assist their children. Second, parent involvement in education refers to participation at school and at home...Third, parents are involved to a greater and more consistent degree when they view their participation as directly linked to the achievement of their children....Fifth, the notion of as shared responsibility for student learning, referred to as collaboration, is recognized as essential for the success of all students. (p.179)

Convinced of the importance of parent involvement if the intervention were to be a success, this writer sought, through parent contact, to help each to understand the important part they would play during the transition of the students from high school to college. In order to be most helpful to the student, this writer believed that parents needed to know about which colleges had special programs for LD students and how they differed, the extra costs of such programs, the students change in legal status from a high school student "covered" by PL 94-142 to a college freshman covered by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and of its practical significance in terms of access and entitlement for services.

During the course of the intervention, the issue of "letting go" as it applies to the LD student leaving for college was broached and discussed, albeit briefly, with the parents. This writer believes that the highly personalized nature of these discussions positively influenced the evaluation responses. For several of the parents, especially those of the two seniors, the topic engendered emotional reactions and served as the "springboard" for further dialogue concerning the myriad of feelings each seemed to experience as the transition neared.

Although the involvement of this writer's counselor colleagues was not a component of this practicum as it was in the first practicum, he periodically and in brief and informal fashion related to his colleagues his work with the students. These colleagues have in the past expressed an interest in counseling to the needs of learning disabled students and their efforts will most probably be a component of any mandated program to provide transition services to learning handicapped students.

In summary, this writer met regularly with six college-bound, CSE classified, learning disabled high school students for periods of approximately 30 minutes, once per week over a period of 8 months. The students were members of the junior and senior class at this writer's workplace. He also met three times with their resource room teachers and three times with their parents. The purpose of the meetings with the students was to do transition counseling, using cognitive techniques, according to a 32 session plan devised by this writer. Resource room teachers and parents were in

cluded in the practicum intervention because of this writer's belief that they have crucially important roles to play in the successful transition of high school special education students to postsecondary institutions of higher learning.

This writer believes that the evidence showed that the practicum intervention was a success. The documentation appearing within this practicum report indicates that the students felt the sessions were informative and "helpful" to them insofar as the information provided and the cognitive techniques learned. It was through the discussion and deployment of such techniques, as well as dialogue with this writer about academic, social, and psychologically related issues that the students came to understand their role in a relatively anxiety-free transition from high school to college. Evidence, in the form of subjective feedback from resource room teachers and parents, further indicated an appreciation of the critical roles they play in facilitating transition. They expressed their support for and acknowledgement of the need for the structured and supportive involvement of adults at this critical time in the lives of the students. They also spoke of, and this writer believes, understood, the benefits of ongoing articulation and collaboration among those involved with the learning disabled student in transition as they did of the importance of acquiring information germane to the process.

This writer appreciates having been involved in a procedure that he believes has and will continue to benefit students and their families. He be-

lieves transitional planning and counseling of learning disabled and other handicapped students will become an institution in his workplace now that the "ice has been broken" and a prototype of such a program has been exposed, presented and positively reviewed by others in that workplace who were not directly involved in the practicum intervention.

Recommendations

1. This writer recommends that the school district support immediate in-service training of high school guidance counselors in the transitional counseling of "special needs" students. Such training should be both preparatory and supportive in nature. Instruction in the use of cognitive techniques should be considered an important component of this instruction.
2. It is this writer's recommendation that the school district immediately initiate a program of transitional counseling for all college-bound students designated by the Committee on Special Education as having a learning disability.

This writer has already spoken to members of the school district administration as well as the chairperson of the guidance department about beginning such a program immediately. He has volunteered his services in whatever capacity they might deem most beneficial. He has also been in communication with the principal at his workplace seeking his support in the continuation and expansion of the practicum intervention activities into the next school year.

3. Special needs students who are not interested in postsecondary education,

whether it be at a college or proprietary school, but are planning to work after graduation from high school should also be exposed to transition counseling orchestrated to meet their individual needs.

It is this writer's belief that these students may be in even greater need for postsecondary school counseling than the college-bound LD students. The non college-bound student has been seen by this writer as frequently lacking direction and focus. Consistent with this view but not specifically related to the "special needs" student, Nightingale and Wolverton (1993) assert that:

> The transition to adulthood is probably easiest for college bound youth because their adolescence, although lengthened by continued dependency on parents, is structured by years of study, athletics, and other activities, and because their parents have the energy and resources to create and access opportunities for them. (p.477)

School administration officials have been lobbied to consider these non-college-bound students' needs.

4. This writer believes that a comprehensive transitional plan for "special needs" students should be investigated as a means of including all individuals (ie. classroom teachers) in the school who impact the students' lives. Transitional counseling performed by guidance personnel would be a component, rather than the centerpiece of this plan.

In essence, just as the education of students doesn't take place only

within the "school house," transitioning of students should not take place solely within the counselor's office.

5. In order to facilitate the above recommendation, this writer would strongly suggest an inservice program to help prepare teachers for a schoolwide transition program for students who are learning or otherwise handicapped.

The aim of such a program would be to train and sensitize teachers and other professionals to the needs of these students and introduce them to techniques useful in terms of assuring a relatively smooth transition to life after high school.

6. Transition planning should begin early in the student's high school experience. Beginning to identify "special needs" students who may be college-bound and those who may be vocationally oriented by roughly the sophomore year might enable educators to provide more appropriate coursework for the respective students. For example, students who are planning to go to work after graduation from high school could be assigned courses which explore viable occupational choices. A work/study component that might include a post-high school apprenticeship experience might be built into the student's program. This would be in contrast to the college-bound students whose predominant coursework would be college preparatory.

Dissemination

This writer's plan to disseminate the practicum results will initially involve its presentation at a regularly scheduled meeting of his school fac-

ulty. Those present will have the opportunity to ask questions of this writer. They will also be encouraged to engage him in discussion about the practicum intervention from the perspective of the process as well as the results and implications. Several copies of the practicum report will be made available for faculty members that wish to read it.

Further dissemination of the writer's practicum results will be achieved through networking within the Nassau Counselors Association, a local but highly "visible" and influential professional organization of school based Long Island guidance personnel of which this writer is a member. Additionally the Long Island Association for Children with Learning Disabilities will be approached for the purpose of offering a workshop presentation. Long range dissemination plans also include a workshop presentation at the annual conference of the National Counselors Association, a Washington, DC based national organization that serves the profession of guidance and counseling.

Another vehicle for the dissemination of this writer's practicum results will be through the professional literature. He believes that writing articles for professional journals in which the results of the practicum intervention are presented and discussed can serve to inform others about his work in a highly effective and efficient manner.

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APPENDIX A
SAMPLE LETTER OF PERMISSION TO PARENTS OF JUNIORS

September, 1992

Dear Junior Parent,

The time is quickly approaching when issues related to post-high school education and entrance into the adult world will need to be considered and discussed. As you are aware, the Junior year imposes upon all students who seek higher education, and their families, the necessity to contemplate taking the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) in October as well as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) in the Spring. Additionally, this is the year that the school primes and encourages students to begin thinking seriously about identifying colleges they might wish to attend and collect information about these schools. These issues can be cause for anxiety in all students. They can be particularly disturbing to the student burdened by a learning disability.

As part of a university project designed to ease the period of transition of learning disabled students from the high school experience to college, I have selected 5 students who I believe would benefit from such involvement. Bob is among them.

The program would consist of the student meeting with me for 30 minutes, once a week, for the next 8 months at which time we will discuss issues related to the above mentioned transition. Among them will be anxieties LD students have about going to college, the need for self-advocacy, decision-making skills, identifying and clarifying goals as well as which colleges to apply to and how to complete the application.

Since transition to college from high school involves the parents as much as it does the student, you will be invited to meet with me on 2 separate occasions to discuss the progress of your child. Of course you can contact me whenever you wish to discuss issues of concern.

If you wish more information about the program addressed above, please contact me immediately at 767-4361. If I don't hear from you by Friday, September 11, I will assume that your permission has been granted to include Bob in the program. I look forward to working with you and your child.

Sincerely,
Ira Weiss, Counselor

APPENDIX B
SAMPLE LETTER OF PERMISSION TO PARENTS OF SENIORS

September, 1992

Dear Senior Parent,

The time is quickly approaching when seniors who plan on attending college next year begin to finalize their plans and send applications to the schools of their choice. It is traditionally a time of great excitement as well as anxiety for both the students and their parents. Experience has shown that for the student with a learning disability it can be a time fraught with worries often not considered by other students.

As part of a university project designed to ease the period of transition of learning disabled students from the high school experience to college, I have selected 5 students who I believe would benefit from such involvement. Jack is among them.

The program would consist of the student meeting with me for 20 minutes, once a week, for the next 8 months at which time we will discuss issues related to the above mentioned transition. Among them will be anxieties LD students have about going to college, the need for self-advocacy, decision-making skills, identifying and clarifying goals as well as which colleges to apply to and how to complete the application.

Since transition to college from high school involves the parents as much as it does the student, you will be invited to meet with me on 2 separate occasions to discuss the progress of your child. Of course you can contact me whenever you wish to discuss issues of concern.

If you wish more information about the program addressed above, please contact me immediately at 767-4361. If I don't hear from you by Friday, October 2, I will assume that your permission has been granted to include Jack in the program.

I look forward to working with you and your child.

Sincerely
Ira Weiss, Counselor

APPENDIX C
SAMPLE STUDENT EVALUATION FORM

STUDENT EVALUATION FORM

Part I

Direction: Please put a checkmark in the space that best describes how you feel about the statement.

	Helpful	Not Helpful
1. My general feeling about the special counseling I received this year is that it was	_____	_____
2. The discussions that we had that concerned college admissions in particular were	_____	_____
3. Sessions in which I was taught how to challenge negative and "downing" thoughts I sometimes have about myself were	_____	_____
4. Discussing the fact that my having a learning disability does not mean that I'm stupid or unintelligent was	_____	_____
5. Learning from Mr. Weiss that I would be able to go to a good college was	_____	_____
6. The sessions in which we spoke about my report card grades and their possible effects were	_____	_____
7. The discussions we had in which we talked about problem-solving and decision-making strategies were	_____	_____
8. The sessions in which Mr. Weiss and I discussed the need for me to be "appropriately assertive" were.....	_____	_____

	Helpful	Not Helpful
9. The sessions in which we spoke about the importance of establishing personal and educational goals were....	_____	_____
10. Learning ways in which I can monitor my academic progress and, as a result, know when to ask for help was	_____	_____
11. Learning to recognize "social cues" and develop interpersonal and social skills was	_____	_____
12. The effect of my parent(s) meeting with Mr. Weiss on several occasions this year was generally	_____	_____

Part II

1. Of all the things that Mr. Weiss and I discussed (being learning disabled, college admissions, challenging negative thoughts about myself, report cards, problem-solving and decision-making strategies, assertiveness, establishing goals for myself, social and interpersonal skills, parents) the thing(s) that I found most helpful talking about was...

2. In what ways do you feel different than you did 8 months ago about graduating from high school and going on to college?

3. If a friend of yours, who happens to also have a learning disability, told you that he wanted to go to college but was fearful of not being accepted and, if he was, not being able to "make it," what would you say to him?

APPENDIX D
SAMPLE RESOURCE ROOM TEACHER EVALUATION FORM

Resource Room Teacher Evaluation Form

Please speak as candidly as you can about your impressions of the 8 month transitional counseling project with your student(s) that was recently completed.

1. In what ways do you feel the student(s) benefited from the transition counseling project?

2. Do you feel that the transitional counseling done throughout this year with the student(s) resulted in him being better prepared to face the challenges of the college application process, as well as attending college as an LD student, than others in the same situation?

3. Would you recommend that a program of transition counseling be available to all CSE designated students at this high school? Please explain.

4. What recommendations for change would you have if this program were to be implemented?

APPENDIX E
SAMPLE PARENT EVALUATION FORM

Parent Evaluation Form

Please speak as candidly as you can about your impressions of the 8 month transitional counseling project that was recently completed.

1. In what specific ways do you feel the project benefited your child?

2. In what specific ways do you feel the project benefited you as the parent of a child with a learning disability?

3. Would you recommend that a program of transitional counseling be offered to other LD students?

4. If the project were to be implemented, what recommendations would you have for change? Be specific.